

MEDIA ADVISORY

WWII veteran to be promoted from private to admiral in one day

70 years not too late for longtime nursing home watchdog

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HOUSTON — Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson decided seven decades is too long for one of the state's foremost advocates of nursing home residents to go without a bump in military rank.

Sam Perlin, 94, was eligible for a promotion to Private First Class while with the Army Signal Corps during World War II. He turned it down for personal reasons.

Now Perlin is not only being drafted into another branch of the service, but will be given the rank of Admiral ...

... in the Texas Navy.

"It's an honor long due a fighter with a big heart like Sam Perlin," said Patterson, who applied for the "promotion" on Perlin's behalf. "He's definitely earned his sleeve stripes."

Patterson will commission Perlin at noon Monday, Sept. 16, at the Double Tree Guest Suites, 5353 Westheimer Road, in Houston.

The rank of Admiral in today's Texas Navy does not mean Perlin is obliged to command battleships in the Gulf of Mexico to defend our 367 miles of coastline against an invasion by The Bahamas. Though Texas did maintain a small flotilla of ships during its time as an independent nation, Admiral in the Texas Navy is an honorary title, commissioned by the Governor. The commendation is usually given upon recommendation by a state official – in this case, Commissioner Patterson, who oversees eight Texas State Veterans Homes.

Perlin's guardianship of the state's long-term care industry has greatly benefitted the Texas State Veterans Homes, Patterson added. Perlin became a nursing home watchdog in the '70s in Florida during his mother's final years. Perlin described her home's conditions as deplorable. Then a successful middle-manager for a steel company in New York, Perlin began his nursing home activism by simply volunteering in homes. Soon, he became ombudsman for a home, then began writing op-eds on senior care issues. Later, he assisted with Florida's Nursing Home Hotline Patrol and helped pioneer the state's first nursing assistant certification program.

Now a resident of Houston, he remains active in persuading Texas legislators to take action regarding nursing home quality. Patterson has described the Brooklyn native as "one of the best friends anyone living in a Texas nursing home never knew they had."

"And it's about time Sam is saluted for all the work he has done," Patterson said.

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